Saskatchewan

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Agriculture Development Fund

FINAL REPORT

PRODUCTION STATISTICS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN SASKATCHEWAN 2000

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Production Statistics for Organic Agriculture in Saskatchewan for 2000

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between
Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
and
Saskatchewan Organic Directorate

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Summary

Organic agriculture is growing rapidly. The objective of this project was to gather and compile production data to characterize the industry. Organic producers were contacted and asked for permission to include information from their certification records in the survey. We obtained information from 433 organic producers in Saskatchewan, through their chapters or certifying bodies or directly from the producers. The organic producers in our survey farmed 343,264 ac, including cultivated acres, pasture and bush. Another 68,819 ac was in transition to be certified in 2001; 9,621 ac, in 2002 and 42,219 ac in 2003. This is estimated to represent 44% of the organic production in Saskatchewan. An additional 122 organic producers harvested wild rice from 30,400 ac. A further 15,600 ac could be certified for organic wild rice production.

Technical Report

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Approved by Arnold Taylor, Darryl Amey, Marc Loiselle, Marion Leniczek, SOD

Acknowledgements

Calling all of the producers on the membership list involved many hours of shared effort. Thank you Mary Beckie, Melanie Prettie and Bonnie Gillette. The administrators of the organic organizations supplied lists, and after permissions were received, they supplied data. Thank you Jean Sloan, OCIA #2; Carol Lowndes, OCIA #3 and #5; Faye Matthews, OCIA #4; Debbie and Ian Miller, OCIA #8; Anne Ford, COCC; and Rusty Plamondon, SOCA. Thanks also to Gerry Ivanochko, OCIA #7; and Lara Scott, OPAM who provided information. And thank you to all the producers we chatted with, who shared data and many opinions.

Description of all work completed

OCIA chapters and other organic organizations were approached for membership lists. We received lists from Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, and 8, from Saskatchewan Organic Certification Association Inc (SOCA), and Canadian Organic Certification Co-Operative Ltd (COCC). Organic Producers Association of Manitoba (OPAM) provided a list of their Saskatchewan members. OCIA chapters 1 and 6 chose not to provide lists. A list of OCIA chapter 6 membership was obtained from their internet web site. Producers from OCIA chapter 6 and OPAM were contacted directly and asked for the more detailed production information. This gave a data base of 433 records. In addition, we obtained records on wild rice production from the administrator of OCIA chapter 7. This information included wild rice production under ProCert certification.

The data records supplied by the organizations include the number of acres in each crop listed on certifying documents or inspector's reports. These records sometimes included land uses such as summer fallow, pasture or bush, but sometimes they did not. Some records included more detail than others. For instance, some indicated peas, while others indicated green peas. Administrators used their best judgment in assigning acres to the different categories where none were specified. Generally they assigned them to the most common category within that species. Discrepancies in acreage often result from incomplete records for land that was not in a certified crop.

Livestock numbers were included for animals raised organically. Some were sold as certified organic; some were not.

Data records were compiled over all sources to produce summaries of organic production. RM designations were not included on many certification documents, so data were not compiled over RM.

Background and project objectives, observations, conclusions

Organic production is rapidly increasing. Production data are collected by various groups, but until this project, there was no current overview available. The objective of this project was to gather the organic production data and compile this data to track the growth and development of the organic industry in Saskatchewan.

The 433 members included in the survey reported 469,530 ac of farm land. Of this, 5,607 ac were reported as conventional; 42,219 ac were in first year transition; 9,621 were reported as second year transitional and 68,819 ac were reported as third year transitional. The remaining 343,264 ac include organic cultivated acres and other land use on organic farms. The number of cultivated organic acres was not determined, because summer fallow, plowdown and alternate use acres were inconsistently reported. Reported summer fallow included 16,433 ac. Pasture was reported as 23,092 ac.

A wide diversity of crops was grown organically in 2000. Cereals included 70,429 acres; oilseeds 15,373 ac; pulses 17,269 ac; herbs 288.6 ac and horticultural crops 505.2 ac. A further 49,711 ac were reported in forage and 30,400 in wild rice. The largest acreages were reported for wheat, wild rice, and tame grass. Please see table 1 for further details.

Livestock production on organic farms included beef cattle, sheep, chickens and others. In total, 10,294 mammals and 3,293 birds were reported. Please see table 2 for further details.

Farm size varied tremendously, from under 5 ac to over 20,000 ac (Table 3). The variation was relatively continuous; the data set did not intrinsically separate into small and large farms.

Herb and horticulture crops were often grown on relatively small fields (less than 1 ac) on larger farms; more than 90% of the producers of horticultural crops and 80% of herb producers in this survey also grew field crops.

Table 1. Acres reported in various types of crop production for 433 producers in Saskatchewan in 2000.			
Crop	Acres	Total for species	Total for crop type
Wheat		31,471	
CWRS	27,556		
Soft spring	300		
CW Extra strong	160		
CPS Red	971		
CPS White	2364		
CWR Winter	120		
Durum		10,222	
Barley		5,787	
Hulless	200		
Malt	2167		
Feed	3420		
Oat		14,069	
Hulless	159		
Hulled	13,910		
Millet		150	
Rye		2,044	
Triticale		151	
Kamut		6,130	
Spelt		405	
Cereal grains			**70,429**
Hemp		30	
Canola		806	
Mustard		1142	
Brown	651		
Yellow	491		
Flax		13,015	
Brown	12,224		
Yellow	791		
Sunola		380	
Oilseeds			**15,373**

Table 1. continued.			
Crop	Acres	Total for species	Total for crop type
Field pea		5,465	
Green	3117		
Yellow	2348		
Lentil		10,817	
French	2,105		
Green	7,098		
Black	722		
Red	892		
Chickpea		972	
Desi	461		
Kabuli	511		
Dry Bean		15	
Pulse			**17,269**
Borage		164.3	
Echinacea		13.7	
Ginseng		1.1	
Caraway		61.2	
Astragalus		5.6	
Feverfew		1.8	
St. John's Wort		1	
Coriander		40	
Herb			**288.6**
Tame grass		32,155	
Yellow sweet clover		7,510	
Seed	159		
Plowdown	7351		
Red clover		2,318	
Seed	972		
Plowdown	1346		
Alfalfa		7,538	
Forage	6,119		
Seed	1,344		
Plowdown	75		
Black medic		5	
Other forage		185	
Total forage			**49,711**

Table 1. continued.			
Crop	Acres	Total for species	Total for crop type
Vegetables		29.1	
Radishes		300	
Tame fruit		23.6	
Wild fruit		152.5	
Horticulture			**505.2**
Quinoa		177	
Canary seed		123	
Buckwheat		413	
Other unspecified		4,708.2	
Miscellaneous			**5421.2**
Grand total			**159,007**

Table 2. Organic livestock production for 433 producers in Saskatchewan in 2000.		
Animal	Head	Total for type
Beef cattle	9,290	
Pigs	132	
Sheep	518	
Elk	195	
Wild Boar	130	
Llama	5	
Goats	24	
Mammals		**10,294**
Layers	1280	
Broilers	1729	
Turkeys	4	
Ducks	30	
Unspecified poultry	250	
Birds		**3,293**
Bee colonies	105	
Unspecified livestock	54	

Table 3. Size of organic farm in Saskatchewan in 2000.	
Number of acres	% of farms
160 ac or less	16
161 – 320	11
321 - 640	17
641 - 1280	26
1281 – 1920	15
More than 1920	15

Project activities, achievements, papers, presentations

Compiled, anonymous results will be made available through the SOD newsletter, on the SOD website, and to each participating chapter or certifying body. Funding through contract 2000-0202 with Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food will be acknowledged in each of these formats.

Lists of producers of each crop and livestock type will be developed based on those who gave permission for their names to be released. This list will include producer name, address and telephone number only – it will not include any detailed information other than the type of crop grown. Again, funding through contract 2000-0202 with Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food will be acknowledged.

Discussion of results and conclusions

Survey results are based on information from 433 producers (excluding wild rice producers). We can make projections of the extent of organic production in Saskatchewan. These projections are limited by three factors.

The first concern is the accuracy of the base information. For most certified crops, the administrators report the acreage with confidence. The number of acres in other land uses; such as summer fallow, plow down, pasture, yard, shelter belt or "waste" land; is not reported consistently on the certification documents. Acreage summaries for crops such as barley, rye, and buckwheat may include these crops used as plow downs, but this is not clearly indicated. Summaries are therefore poor indicators of the numbers of acres in non-crop use.

Secondly, to project the numbers collected to the population of organic producers in the province, we need to assume that the organic producers who participated in this project are representative of the entire industry. I have no way of verifying this. ProCert and OCIA #1, for instance, may attract a segment of the organic population that is in some way unique. Participating organic groups tended to be similar, but do reflect differences related to the geographic regions of their members.

Thirdly, we need an estimate of the number of organic producers in the province. Excluding wild rice producers, there were 703 individuals listed in the records we accessed. Approximately 9% of those contacted from these lists were not organic producers in Saskatchewan. They were processors, associate members, out of province or retired. This gives an estimate of 640 producers in those organizations. Including estimates for the number of members in ProCert (280 excluding wild rice producers) and OCIA#1 (65) gives an estimated total of 986 organic producers in Saskatchewan.

Based on these estimates, organic production in Saskatchewan in 2000 included approximately 160,000 ac cereal, 35,000 ac oilseed, 39,000 ac pulses, 113,000 ac forage and 14,000 ac other crops. We can project an increase of 157,000 ac in 2001. This does not include the potential for immediate growth in certified organic wild rice production, as it does not require the same transition process. Projections for further years are harder to determine, as many producers have not solidified their plans at this stage. The future acreage by crop is harder to project, being subject to rotational and market considerations. At the moment, for instance, wheat is one of the most abundant organic crops. This is very likely to change if GMO wheats are introduced to Saskatchewan.

Indications for further development

This survey indicates the most current production statistics available. In order to track changes and determine trends, it will be necessary to compile similar information in coming years. The process could be greatly streamlined if permission sheets could go out to producers with the inspectors, or with the certification documents that each body requires.

More consistent and accurate information would be possible if the information required was specified at the time the producer gave permission. For instance, if the form asked for the number of acres in each land use, summing to the total farm acreage, we might have more reliable information on summer fallow, pasture, and other non-crop uses.

Information of benefit to producers, processors, or government

A summary of organic activity benefits many segments of the agricultural industry in Saskatchewan. This includes producers considering the validity of this option as a viable alternative to their current practices; SOD, in promoting the industry; researchers wishing to target their research to appropriate concerns for the organic industry; marketers and processors determining if the organic industry has reached sufficient potential for their interest and SAF, in making appropriate resource allocation decisions.

Personnel:
Project manager: Brenda Frick, 2 months equivalent over Nov – Mar; $6000
Telephone liaison with producers: Mary Beckie, Melanie Prettie, Bonnie Gillette; $2 per call, $778
Data collection: Jean Sloan, Carol Lowndes, Faye Matthews, Gerry Ivanochko, Debbie Miller, Rusty Plamondon, Anne Ford, Brenda Frick; $5 per producer, $2190

Equipment: A Canon faxphone B640 was rented for this project, at $50 per month for 3 months.

Project Developed Materials: The attached report, and lists of producers of various crops and livestock will be available to participating organic groups through the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate.

Project Photos: No photos were taken.

Acknowledgement: Funding from Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food through project 2000-0202 will be acknowledged on all distributed materials for this project.